

Sisters

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Summary: Karst and Menardi have a healthy sibling rivalry. Well, sort of. Karst/Saturos/Menardi

***Chapter 1*: Sisters**

So, I was reading Golden Sun fic today, and I was suddenly taken by the huge lack of fic involving Karst! I love Karst. And I love Menardi. And I love characters who are sisters. So, I typed this, and it flowed disturbingly easily. Hmm. Clearly I should write more Golden Sun fic. :)

Chapter 1

Sisters Menardi and Karst had always had quite the sibling rivalry. They were well-known to be the most hot-headed and violent young girls in all of Prox, and were given a wide berth by most. Despite their caustic personalities, however, the two sisters had grown into rather attractive young women, though polar opposites- Menardi, with her light hair, cold and reserved, and Karst, hair flaming red, emotional and quick to anger. They lived alone in a house provided by the Prox's Elder, minding their own business for the most part and being left alone by the village in return.

That did not, of course, prevent them from meddling in *each other's* business as much as they wanted.

"Karst. What are you doing?" The young girl addressed as Karst was so startled that she almost dropped the arm-load of wood she was carrying, which would have been quite a disaster, as it would have gotten wet in all of the snow and been useless for the fires. As it was, she barely held on to her load, gloved hands slowly icing over, though as a Proxian she felt no cold.

"You know exactly what I'm doing," she muttered to her older sister, not meeting her eyes. "I have to light the fires at

the base of the Lighthouse. It's my job."

"I *know* it's your job. What I want to know is why you're doing it at *night*. If you get hurt, you'll freeze," Menardi scoffed. As she spoke, she unwound the scarf from around her own neck, draping it around Karst's shoulders to give her some extra protection from the weather. Once the wrap was gone, Menardi's own face was exposed to the wind, her pink skin and pointed ears barely visible in the poor light.

Proxians were not quite human but not quite monster, walking a careful line in-between. That was the way things had been, ever since the village was placed here to protect the Mars Lighthouse. But the beacon had long since gone out, and now all the people of Prox could do was keep the fires at the base burning bright, to keep the entrance thawed, just in case someone came to light it. As if that would ever happen.

"I'm fine," Karst growled as she elbowed her way around her nosy sister. The walk to the Lighthouse wasn't much farther, now, and she didn't need anyone getting in the way, since that would just make the arduous task crawl by that much more slowly.

"Ok, fine. Have it your way. But I am *not* going out in the dead of night to get the healer again, you hear me!?" Menardi snapped. "Because, as you apparently haven't noticed, going out in the middle of the night in Prox is a *very stupid thing to do*." With that, she turned on her heel, her furry cloak swirling behind her as she tromped clumsily back towards the village through the snow. The snowfall never stopped in Prox, so no matter how many times the fluffy white obstruction was beat down by feet and tools, there somehow always managed to be just enough left to make walking a chore.

Karst had had the job of lighting the fires at the base of the Lighthouse for years, now, ever since she and Menardi's parents had died. Menardi was one of the best Adepts in the village, and as such was quickly taken under the chieftain's wing and trained to be a warrior. Karst, on the other hand, had been given her own job as a favor by the Elder, who wanted the two of them to stay taken care of. Each Proxian had his or her own task, after all, and since Karst had been too young to help scavenge for food and not talented enough to be trained as a warrior, well, she'd been stuck with this.

Mars Lighthouse loomed above her, somehow faintly lit despite the darkness of nightfall, demonstrating the Psynergy still locked within. No one in Prox, for as long as recorded history, had ever been above the first floor. No one knew what was producing that light. Maybe monsters, for all Karst knew- she just didn't want to find out. Her only dream was to be trained as a guardian, like Menardi, to be given a partner and allowed to leave the village. At 15 she was more than old enough, now- she had no confirmation, but she'd suspected for a while that it was Menardi's influence over the chieftain that kept her doing this useless job instead of something more worthwhile.

With a sigh, Karst used her Fire Psynergy to open the door. She always lit the fires inside first, since they were the easiest, and if she did the outside fires last and left immediately afterwards, she'd honestly be able to say she'd gone home before they'd gone out. No harm in covering up your own laziness, after all. No sooner had she deposited her cargo in a singular dry patch of tile, then she was startled out of her thoughts by a sudden movement.

"Wha-? Who's there?" she screeched, even as she whirled around and prepared to lob a fireball at her would-be

assailant. Her Psynergy may have been weak, but helped by the latent powers of Mars Lighthouse, she was more than capable of defending herself. She didn't get the chance, however, as a hand not unlike her own gently grabbed her wrist.

"Relax, Karst. It's me," a familiar voice said softly. Somehow he'd gotten behind her. The attack died in Karst's hand, and she sighed with happiness and relief, spinning around and throwing her arms around his middle, burying her face in his chest.

"Saturos," she murmured. Saturos often came out to the lighthouse to meet her, since it was the least likely place for someone to find them. She couldn't deny being excited to see him, but even as she said his name, she jumped back. "Saturos," she said again, more seriously. "Menardi tried to follow me out here. I don't think it's safe anymore."

Yeah, Karst was hooking up with her sister's boyfriend. She probably should have felt more guilty about that than she did.

"Relax," Saturos repeated himself, sliding his arms around Karst's slender hips. He was three years older than her, 18, the same age as Menardi, and Karst thought he was just about the best thing since sliced bread. His scales and spikes, a deep ocean blue, just seemed so much cuter than the lesser shades on the boys her own age, and besides that, he was being trained as a guardian. Her dream. Soothed by his words and his touches, she obediently laid her head back down on his chest.

"So. What brings you out here in the dead of night?" she joked. Maybe it was her imagination, but Saturos seemed to stiffen a little.

"Menardi didn't tell you?" he finally asked. Once again, Karst tilted her chin up.

"Didn't tell me what?" she asked dangerously, sparks behind her eyes. Menardi was rather a touchy subject with Karst. They did not, after all, get along. Saturos, bless him, actually winced.

"No! Nothing like that. She's getting sent out on her first mission. And it's an important one." Karst froze up inside.

"What is it?" *And why hasn't Menardi told me about it?*

"I can't tell you." *Yes you can.* Karst blinked up at him innocently. Saturos seemed to melt. Yes, of the two sisters, Karst was definitely the one with more enhanced feminine wiles. Menardi was just much too violent and dangerous, but hey, some people liked that sort of thing. Not Karst's Saturos, though. She knew the only reason he didn't leave her sister was because he was afraid of what would happen to him if he did.

"Ok, ok," Saturos finally gave in, as Karst batted her eyelashes and caressed his cheek with her fingers. "A group of guardians is being sent to retrieve the Elemental Stars. The gems that light the lighthouses." Karst's eyes widened. That was much more important than she'd been expecting. "In other words, we're leaving on a mission to finally save Prox."

"Didn't the Elder already *send* a group to Sol Sanctum?" she asked stiffly.

"Yes, but they were turned away. So we're going back to steal the Stars." Saturos paused and glanced around, looking a little worried, as if out here in the Lighthouse

someone might have overheard them. "And you can't tell anyone I told you all that," he ordered.

Telling anyone about the mission was the absolute last thing on Karst's mind. Her sister was leaving Prox. Sure, they didn't get along, sure, their fights often turned violent, sure, Karst spent most of her nights making out and otherwise with Menardi's boyfriend of more than a year. But surely her own flesh-and-blood sister, her only living relative, would be in some sort of hurry to tell her that she was *leaving*?

"Why didn't *she* tell me?" Karst whispered.

"We just found out today. She probably hasn't figured out how yet," Saturos said, in a strained tone of voice, as if he were trying to be sympathetic and not quite succeeding. "Plus, she was just assigned her partner." Oh. Right. Guardians were assigned a partner when they turned 18. Wait.

"It's you," Karst said flatly.

"Yes. Menardi and I are battle partners. I'm going too."

Karst dropped her arms, and pushed Saturos away from her. Any thoughts she may have begun to have about her sister's safety were vanished, and replaced entirely with thoughts of herself. All she could think was how, and why. How could this be happening *now*, just when everything was going so well for her? Why was Saturos leaving her for her sister? *That's not what he's doing*, her more rational side tried to explain to her. Unfortunately for everyone involved, her irrational side won out.

"You're leaving me?" she screeched. Saturos didn't know how to react.

"Uh. What?"

"You're leaving me for *her*," Karst cried, big teardrops beginning to freeze onto her face. Not being able to feel cold, she barely even noticed.

"Karst, it's my job. My duty. My responsibility to Prox. I'd stay if I could. Really." He tried to comfort her, sort of half-heartedly, but to no avail. Karst continued to sob, her job in the Lighthouse completely forgotten as she wailed away about her many problems and how unfair her life was and that sort of thing. For a few minutes, Saturos attempted to calm her down, before apparently finally deciding that it just was not worth it.

"Well, that's it. We're leaving tomorrow morning. If you're going to act like this, I don't want to see you." Before Karst could utter the words to stop him, he spun on his heel and strutted out of the Lighthouse. Her lower lip quivered, and she burst into a new round of hysterical sobs. In one fell swoop, she'd lost her sister *and* her sort-of boyfriend. And she was still stuck lighting the torches at the bottom of Mars Lighthouse every day and night. What was she going to do?

She didn't want to see Menardi, and she had absolutely zero desire to go after Saturos, not after he talked to her like that. So, she stayed alone. Alone, the same way she would be after Menardi deserted her. Stuck in Prox with not a single living relative, just some Elder who felt sorry for her and a chieftain who hated her and a bunch of townspeople who couldn't care less that she existed.

That night, she slept in the Lighthouse, surrounded by magical fire to keep the monsters at bay. As she slept, the adolescent turmoil and life frustration and jealousy and

bitterness swept together and consumed her, and so, she awoke with one single target in mind.

Menardi.

All of this, this was all her sister's fault. Her stupid job, her stupid life, her sudden lack of boyfriend- all of it was Menardi's doing. She had to head home, to give her big dumb sister a piece of her mind. Just as she'd formulated her grand master plan, well, that was when she remembered Saturos's last words to her.

We're leaving tomorrow morning.

Tomorrow morning was right now. Oh. Oh, no. What if they were already gone!?

Since she hadn't lit the torches, the magical snow produced from the Gaia Rift had spent the night piling itself high around the Lighthouse's foundations. With a snarl, Karst melted her way through the barriers, moving as quickly as she could back towards Prox. As quickly as she could was unfortunately not very fast, for as soon as she managed to melt a pathway, more snow would fall to cover it. She made it back, though, silently fuming, scaled arms quivering not in cold but in frustration. She sprinted through the village's northern gates just in time to be accosted by the village chieftain, Puelle.

"Karst!" he scolded, grabbing her arm. She scowled. "Where have you been? The departure has been delayed for over an hour because Menardi has been out searching for *you*!" Puelle, the town's defacto leader since the Elder couldn't be bothered, stood out even among Proxians- the man's dark green skin was just a smidge *too* reptilian for Karst's personal comfort, and as such she usually avoided him.

Puelle's treatment of her demonstrated easily that the dislike was most definitely mutual.

"I fell asleep," she muttered. Hey, it was the truth. "I'm going to see her now. Where is she?" Puelle relaxed his grip on her arm, but only slightly.

"She's down at the dock. We'll go together. Honestly, I expect better from the sister of one of the town's most promising guardians." Karst grimaced, but braced herself for the lecture. "And the Lighthouse Keeper, too! I don't know why the Elder lets you keep that job," he muttered, quietly enough that he was clearly talking to himself, while loud enough for Karst to easily hear it.

"I'm good at it," she defended herself.

"Hmm, yes," Puelle said distractedly. "Sometimes," he muttered under his breath.

The rest of the walk was passed in silence, with the chieftain refusing to lessen his grip on her upper arm even one iota. She wanted to see her sister, too. To give her a piece of her mind, granted, but it's not like she was going to run off in some completely different direction. Occasionally Puelle would have to use Fire Psynergy to clear a path to walk in, and Karst decided not to offer her help. Stupid Puelle probably thought she couldn't use fire spells, anyway.

In any case, they made the trek down to the village's port, such as it was, without too much difficulty. Since Prox was so far up north, the port was only usable for a very small portion of the year, usually no more than a month or two. The village had exactly one boat, a magical artifact, controlled by Psynergy. No normal boat would have a hope of making it to Prox.

Menardi was there, dressed in her travelling clothes, arguing animatedly with a large guardian Karst recognized as Salaman, who appeared to have been designated the leader of the group, while Saturos stood mildly off to one side. The rest of the guardians were already on the boat, and a sizable group of townspeople were also gathered, apparently to see them off. As Puelle and Karst approached the ship, her sister's words floated up to her ears.

"...*not* boarding that thing... until... have to see my sister!" she shouted, the harsh winds covering up a good chunk of the words. The gist was easy to pick up, however, and Karst was pleased to see Saturos looking appropriately meek.

"Salaman! Menardi!" Puelle called. "I found her in the northern part of the village." With only those words left as an introduction, Puelle finally released Karst's arm, sending her tumbling forward towards the mission party. All of them stared, with only Saturos unable to meet her or Menardi's eyes. Finally, Menardi broke away from the group, and marched towards Karst through the snow. Karst jutted her chin out, fully prepared to tell her sister off, when suddenly, Menardi punched her in the face. *Hard*.

"*Ow!* Wha-?" Karst was cut off when Menardi enveloped her in a sudden hug, much tighter than any hug they'd shared recently. In fact, the two sisters simply *did not* hug. The whole hugging thing was unheard of. Karst was so shocked that for a long moment she didn't hug back, before slowly bringing her arms up around her sister's waist. Finally, Menardi released her, and shook her head.

"Stupid," was all she said, though the tiniest of smiles was on her lips. Finally, she patted Karst rather condescendingly on the head, and turned to her new boss.

"Ok. We can go now," she said easily. She strode confidently back to the other guardians, taking Saturos's hand in her own. Karst stared after her, completely confused. As was what usually happened, that confusion began to burn into a deep, slow fury.

"What is wrong with you!?" she screamed.

"Bye, Sis," Menardi called to her over the wind. "Don't burn the house down while I'm gone, ok?"

So much was waiting on the tip of Karst's tongue- she had so much she wanted to say. She wanted to tell her how stupid *she* was, how heartless she was for leaving her behind in crummy Prox, how unfair it was that she got to travel with Saturos. She wanted to scream and hit her back and pull her hair and holler into her ears until they bled, just like when they were kids. But she couldn't. Her tongue was frozen.

"Bye, Sis," she finally whispered, with a tiny, feeble wave. And so she stood, in front of that crowd of people, silent as they cheered their own farewells, watching as the ship disappeared into the fog and the ice. She stayed there long after everyone else had left, long after Prox's short daylight hours had ended and plunged the village into night. Unaffected by the cold, she sat, watching, waiting for her sister to come back.

After all those hours, it was Puelle who came for her. Still staring at the ocean, watching, waiting, Karst silently allowed him to take her arm and lead her back to Prox.

Aww. I have a full outline of this, with multiple chapters, much more sibling drama, and pairing additions of Karst/Felix, one-sided Karst/Agatio, and a Karst/Alex/Menardi love triangle. This can also stand alone as a one-shot,

though, and I have loads of multi-chaps going on right now.
So, if you would like me to continue, please let me know. ;)